



October 7, 2022

Ms. Janet Coit
Assistant Administrator for Fisheries
National Marine Fisheries Service
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Dear Assistant Administrator Coit:

We are writing to urge you in the strongest terms for the NOAA Fisheries to host at least one additional in-person scoping hearing in Downeast Maine as the agency initiates Phase 2 of the Atlantic Large Whale Take Reduction Plan (ALWTRP) to reduce the risk of serious injuries and mortalities of North Atlantic right whales. Following Wednesday evening's session in Portland, it is clear from the number of attendees in the audience and the many who were unable to offer remarks that the magnitude of the changes you are proposing to Maine's lobster fishery merit additional in-person engagement with the people and communities whose livelihoods depend on this resource.

As we have previously expressed to you, if implemented, the 90 percent risk reduction target NOAA Fisheries is pursuing in just two years would be a death knell for our nation's lobster industry. It would close off thousands of miles of prime fishing areas and require lobstermen and women to make significant changes to how they harvest the resource, including the use of "ropeless" fishing gear when it is not technologically or economically viable. Given these possible outcomes, it is unacceptable that your agency is only holding one in-person meeting hours away from some of our state's largest lobster ports, forcing lobstermen to spend time off the water, which is their primary if not only source of income. This decision to knowingly limit opportunities to directly engage with the lobstermen and our coastal communities speaks volumes about your concern for their future.

There is still time for NOAA officials to demonstrate their commitment to engaging with the people they are supposed to serve. We implore you to schedule an additional in-person hearing in Downeast Maine so that the voices of all of those impacted by these new regulations can be heard.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Jared Golden
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

Janet T. Mills
Governor